1: Burrows--36 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 241, 262, 462 Ifalik

"Taro is the staple starchy food of the trade-wind season, as breadfruit is of the season of westerly winds. This is not because more taro is available at one time than another--it can be harvested at any time--but because it is used most when breadfruit is scarce.

The limiting factor to the supply of taro on Ifalik is labor. The big swamp on Falālap has been planted to taro from time immemorial. More grows there now than can be eaten or taken care of, --especially since the laborious work of weeding and fertilizing it is left entirely to women."

"If we may use the word taro for a moment in a broader sense than the botanists would approve, there are three main types on Ifalik. The one that should not be called taro is the giant arum (filē; Alocasia macrorrhiza) sometimes called in English by the Polynesian name kape. A second is the coarse yellow-fleshed pulaka (pulax, Cyrtosperma chamissonis) grown on atolls far and wide over the Pacific, commonly in artificial pits. The third is true taro, of the type favored on high islands (wot, Colocasia esculenta). This is smaller than the other two, and its leaves are rounded where theirs come to three points. Its flesh is finer-grained, gray in color with a purplish cast.

The giant arum of filē is less exacting in the matter of soil than the others. It grows rankly about the edges of water-holes or, apparently, whereever it can get plenty of moisture from below. Though the natives plant it and weed around it, they eat it much less than the others. (Tom said this was a matter of individual taste, and possibly we did not happen to observe households particularly fond of filē.) Two reasons were given for this. One is that not all women know how to prepare filē properly. A good deal of the outside must be taken off, for one thing. If it is not properly prepared the minute spicules in it will bite the tongue and throat. The other reason is that 'If a man eats filē, he won't catch any fish.'

Pulax is the type grown in greatest quantity in the Falālāp taro swamp (nibwél--to

distinguish from niwel, which means forest or 'bush'.) Everybody on either island has a hereditary right to share in at least one patch in this swamp.

Wot is grown in smallest quantity, apparently because it requires most cultivation. Though highly esteemed, it does not seem to be preferred to pulax to any such extent as on high islands, where pulax may be considered fit only for areas where nothing better will grow. Young leaves of wot, tenderer than those of pulax and filē, are chopped up, stripped of their ribs and cooked for greens."

1: Burrows--37-38 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 241, 462

"The cultivation of taro (geligeli) is exclusively women's work. It is done either singly or in small groups, such as mother and daughter. Clearing ground to prepare a new patch for planting would require more labor. Presumably, men would be called in for this; but as there is more land in taro than can be used, new patches are hardly ever cleared nowadays.

After planting, the main task is to cut and pull the weeds which threaten to choke out the small plants. A creeping grass whose roots run underground (buyol; Lepturus repens) seems to be the most troublesome. This is where wot needs more care; because it is smaller, for one thing. In places pulax grows eight feet high or more, and the plants crowd so thickly together that one walks under them in twilight. There the weeds are effectively shaded out. [38]

The weeds pulled are usually converted at once into green manure or compost by burying them between the rows of taro. Lagajorang, who gave us a demonstration of the wot planting, first dug a pit about 10 feet long, 3 feet wide and two feet deep. This she did in a surprisingly short time, working with her bare hands in the soft muck. Then she pulled grass and weeds along a neighboring row, laid this in the pit, and covered it over. Finally she brought young wot plants, about a foot long (baulax) from a patch nearby, where they had sprung up from suckers around a parent plant. These she stuck into the bed just prepared, pressing the earth well down and leaving a slight depression about each plant, presumably to hold water."

1: Burrows--38 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 241 Ifalik

"A working day in the taro patch lasts from soon after daybreak until about noon. If a woman gets thirsty at her work, she may pause to drink a coconut; but must leave the taro patch to do it. If she were to drink on the patch, the plants would not grow.

The women are perfectly aware of the fertilizing effect of burying weeds under the plants. This, with an idealized view of a gardener's enthusiasm for her work, comes out in one of their songs:

Lovemaking would keep me from my garden.
I like to go there every day.
I don't like to waste time sleeping;
I like to see my taro grow tall.
I heap earth around the wot plants,
Bury leaves all about the wot,
To make it grow faster."

1: Burrows -39 (1947-48) Woleaians /-2
116, 262, 241, 824 Ifalik

"Though bananas (wir) bear well, and the fruit of some of the varieties seemed to us of excellent quality, the people have a rather low opinion of them as food. They are sometimes eaten, either raw or cooked; but do not compare in importance with breadfruit or taro.

The number of other plants used for food is considerable, but none of them, nor even all taken together, make up an important part of the diet. Arrowroot (mogmog; Tacca leontopetaloides) grows wild under the breadfruit trees. The people know how to make starch (mwisi) out of the roots but rarely take the trouble to do so. We never saw the process or any of the product. Sugar-cane (wou; Saccharum officinarum) is planted on or near house platforms. Children, and more rarely adults, enjoy chewing a piece of the stalk. But one or two clumps are enough for a household.

A plant said to become important in case of famine following a hurricane is gop (Portulaca samoensis). The tiny succulent leaves are washed in sea water, then boiled in fresh water, then crushed with the coral pounder and mixed with coconut cream.

Several plants of European introduction are grown to some extent: squash (a summer squash or marrow), papaia, pineapple. The squash and papaya plants are common, but bear very little, and that of miserable quality. Pineapples are very scarce. I can not recall seeing a plant on the island, but we were offered one fruit, quite a good one.

Fruits of several native trees are eaten, but not especially prized. Those named to me were avūs (Crataeva speciosa) and song (Bruguiera conjugata). The nuts of kazās

(Terminalia catappa?) are enjoyed by small boys enough to induce them to crush the thick, fibrous hulls.

Young leaves from the tips of the branches of a full-sized tree, the aroma (Pipturus argenteus) are said to make edible greens if boiled, mashed, and mixed with toddy and coconut cream."

1: Burrows--40 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 286, 241 Ifalik

"The first step in weaving is to set up the warp. This is done on a set of seven pegs stuck in holes on a board about 3 feet long. The pegs project from the board about 8 inches. The order in which fibers of different colors are wound on the pegs determines the succession of longitudinal stripes in the cloth, and the number of turns taken of each color determines the width of each stripe. On every other turn a short separate piece of fiber is passed about the warp and then tied in a small loop or leash around one of the pegs. This procedure is shown in Fig. 4.

The warp thus prepared is then transferred to the loom. The construction of this is shown in Fig. 3.

The weaver sits facing the frame, with her feet braced against it. She fastens the belt about her back, and by leaning back on it keeps the warp taut. The weft is wound on a shuttle shaped like the netting-needles used in making seines. Successive weft fibers are pressed together with a sword. Fringes are left at each end of the piece of cloth. The weaving is entirely in simple check, and the only color patterns woven in are longitudinal stripes. Transverse borders are often embroidered with a needle near each end. The patterns on these include checks, triangles, diamonds, zigzag, lines, herringbone stripes, and a variety of other rectilinear figures."

1: Burrows--40 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 386, 241 Ifalik

"Whichever plant [KS: banana or hibiscus] is used, some of the fibers are soaked in dye before weaving. Nearly all the dye in use in 1947-8 had been bought from the Japanese. Two native dyes are still remembered, though now rarely or never used. One is a black, obtained from a porous, floating mineral that sometimes drifts to Ifalik. It is ground into water by rubbing on a piece of iron. The other native dye is a red, made by mixing coral lime and lel bark in water. Turmeric paint, though not used to dye fibers before weaving, may be rubbed over finished cloth."

1: Burrows--40 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 286, 241 Ifalik

"Though the fruit of bananas is not esteemed, the fiber of the trunk is in great demand for weaving native cloth. Women remove the green outer layer, then peel off in thin strips the fiber of which most of the trunk is composed. They hang it in the sun for two or three days, soak it in salt water for four or five days, then hang it out again for a period that varies from five to ten days, depending on the sunshine. Then they split it to the width desired. Most of the cloths ran between 20 and 30 wefts to the inch. The fibers are not spun, but woven flat.

The bast of hau (gilivō; Hibiscus tiliaceus) is also used for weaving, but is considered inferior to banana fiber. Of the many uses to which this species of Hibiscus is put elsewhere in the Pacific, the only ones customary on Ifalik are for weaving and formerly, we were told, for fishing-lines. The plant is not abundant and does not grow to great size, perhaps because the women cut most of the shoots young. To prepare the bast for weaving, they scrape off the outer bark and soak the sticks in salt water, weighted down with coral, for four days. Then they strip off the bast, hang it in the sun to bleach and dry, and split it into wefts, most of them a little coarser than those of banana fiber. They are said to be good for women's skirts, but too stiff for men's loin cloths."

"A man will say bwogotai--'my coconut land', as Tom translated it-- either of tracts in which he has inherited a share through his mother, or tracts inherited in his wife's lineage, in which he shares the usufruct by virtue of living on her homestead and gathering coconuts and breadfruit for the household. When Tom said of a bit of coconut land through which we were passing, 'This my land', I asked him if it belonged to him and nobody else. He answered, 'Me and my sister and my sister's boy,' the lineage again. I happen not to have a specific statement referring to land of the wife's lineage, but general discussions of the matter suggest that he might say first 'This my land'; then, if pressed, 'blong my wife and my boy.'

Ownership and inheritance of tracts in the taro swamp conform to the same rule. But in this case they are verbalized differently. Taro patches are spoken of as the property of any of the women who work them, or of their clan. Thus when Tom and his wife Lagajarong took us through the taro swamp so that she might give us a demonstration of weeding and planting, he said of the particular tracts we visited, not 'my land' but 'blong my wife.' He added proudly that she had inherited seven such patches. To my usual follow-up question, he said they were patches belonging to her clan, Mangaulevar. When he pointed out a particularly large stretch as belonging to Wolpetau, I unfortunately failed to follow up the statement; but suspect that this land, or at least some of it, was inherited by Wolpetau's wife as a member of a lineage of Bwël clan.

Members of that clan, traditionally associated with taro culture and now reduced to 11 members, probably have more taro land than they can care for. In this case, probable reasons for naming the chief rather than his wife as owner are his rank and the fact that as a public figure he was well known to me, while his wife was not."

1: Burrows--110
116, 241, 423, 613

(1947-48)

Woleaians
Ifalik

"Certain coconut trees are owned and inherited in a special way. Although the run of the trees in the coconut groves 'go with the land' according to the scheme just described, custom allows any man to ask permission to plant coconuts on another's land. As far as learned, refusal of such a request is unheard-of. But such a planting would never be on a large scale. Only a small, even number of trees--usually two or four--will be planted. Half of them will belong to the owner of the land; more precisely, to his household and eventually his lineage. The other half will belong to the man who planted the nuts. And these will not be inherited according to the usual pattern, within his maternal lineage. They will pass to his son, and so on, patrilineally.

The advantage of this special kind of ownership is convenience. When a man gets thirsty, no matter where he is, he will probably own a coconut tree not far away where he can get a young nut to drink. Coconut trees and the fruit on them are very definitely not public property. Asked whether a man might take a nut from a tree that did not belong to him, Tom said 'very bad that.' Having a tree of your own nearby reduces temptation to steal."

1: Burrows--182 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 241, 271, 784 Ifalik

"When Tom's wife Lagarajong gave us a demonstration of preparing a bed and planting wot, we all grew thirsty, and Tom cut drinking coconuts for us from a nearby tree. In order to drink them, we had to sit in the clump of coconut trees, which rose like an islet out of the lower land of taro swamp. Tom explained that drinking coconuts on the taro land itself is tabw. This, and the taboo on gardening during menstruation, are the only ones collected in connection with this branch of food production. It would not be surprising if there were a number of others not brought out by my matter-of-fact questions about gardening, and not observed directly because the taro patch is women's territory (though not taboo to men), and we spent only a few hours there."

2: Damm et al. --27 (1909) 1938 Woleaians
116, 241, 177 Ifaluk

There is a small selection of edible plants and fruit trees; three kinds of taro (wůlak, wǒd, fíle), bananas (wǐdj), coconut palms (lǖ) and bread-fruit trees (mǎi). Sugar-cane (wǒu) and pumpkins (galawǎs) were introduced by white men.

2: Damm et al. --27 [3] (1909) 1938 Woleaians
116, 241, 462 Ifaluk

The cultivation of taro is considered a feminine task; men only help occasionally, and quite unwillingly. Women plant the tuberous fruit in old ditches, (bóalü), and for this purpose they use a digging stick (gót), which is often sharpened at both ends. It is possible that the other pointed weapons may also be utilized in this fashion. Leaves serve for fertilizer (wáli). Women plant bananas inside and along the ditches too.

The men attend to the care of the coconut palms and the bread-fruit trees. The head chief superintends all the cultivation of the land.

2: Damm et al. --124 (1909) 1938 Wolea[illegible]s
116, 241 Aurupik

The fields of Eauripik were cultivated in the same manner as on the other low islands of the Caroline archipelago. They were planted with swamp taro, common taro and sweet potatoes. Coconut palms and bread-fruit supplied edible fruits. Hellwig also mentions jáxun and kŏpo as plants used for nourishment.

The following edible plants and fruit trees are planted or cultivated: different kinds of taro: file e lfaluk (very small) file e kŏl, uŏt, momŏiga, marĭn.
Colocasia: lăk, pulăk
sweet potatoes: kamŏti
sedum: anŭs, xŏp, eaugŭle.
pumpkins: ewŭrs
sugar-cane: uwâu
bananas: uĭ
Terminabia: fariŏp
Morinda citrifolia: nĕre.
pandanus: fă
figs: xoăn
a peach-like fruit, with a number of disk-like stones: xumŭr
bread-fruit: mâ; this fruit begins to grow in the uarĭx month; in maîrĭx it starts to ripen, and in mâilŏp it is mature; the whole process takes six months. The fruit of the breadfruit provides the natives favorite dish, mâra, which is prepared in the same way as the măr of the Polowat islanders.
coconut palm: nĭu
[CS: Omission of the various terms describing the coconut palm, page 163] There is no

systematic planting whatsoever. Bananas, sweet potatoes, coconut palms grow together, but the taro, on the other hand, is planted in fields that are specially prepared. The natives use large rectangular ditches [164] (poadĕ), which are surrounded by an earth wall (xatŭ) made of the soil that has been excavated. The men prepare the fields, but the women do the real cultivation; for the taro they use a wooden spade (xuotŏ; handle-erĕ, blade - xăroxăre). The men take care of the coconut palms, but the other fruit trees are left to the women. The chief superintends all the work in the fields; and he punishes anyone who is not doing his task properly. At certain times he also puts a tabu on the uninhabited island Eăd so that no one may go there. This is to protect the stands of coconut palms and tobacco plants; and it is also a means of safeguarding the turtles, which come on land to spawn.

2: Damm et al. :--198 (1909) 1938 Woleaians
116, 776, 241 Faraulep

The ruler of the air (oiutjăr; the blue of the heaven - li ma râuerâú) is Thâuŭr, a brother of Solâl; he is the intermediary between the heavens and the underworld, and he communicates the wishes of Alŭelâp and Solâl to mankind. He takes care of the ripening of the bread-fruit, taro, sweet potatoes, and any other foods.

3: Thilenius and Hellwig--253-254 (1909-10) 1927 Woleaians
116, 262, 241 Woleai

On that point where, during the last typhoon (1907), the sea had flooded over the south coast, a pond was formed, 300 meters long; framed with woods, it offers now an idyllic sight. The surrounding swamp-taro plantations thrive quite well, just as on several humid places in the proximity of the houses. Two more taro varieties and sweet potato fields in the dry ground along the pathway and in the neighborhood of houses yield an ample supply. On the other hand, there are only a few papaw trees, and, at present, there is not a single fruit-bearing breadfruit tree on the whole island....[254] Coconuts, the chief article of food, are still in abundance for the small population. On each farmstead supplies of drinking and eating nuts can be seen. As it is customary on most of the Caroline Islands, the sap of the palmtrees is collected one to three times a day for the preparation of the favorite fermented drink. Many fruit trees have escaped the devastation... Three lizard varieties were so frequent that, standing still in the bush, one could sometimes find oneself surrounded by up to 10 lizards. Sometimes a plentitude of heavily populated formicaries could become a bother. In a saltwater hole (diameter: 1 1/2 m., depth: 1/3 meter) on the farmstead Mauxean, Hellwig was shown a fish of dark-green-bluish, almost black color; it was about 30-40 cm. long; its caudal fin was placed horizontally, and it also worked in this direction. Two years ago, the typhoon had thrown this fish into this waterhole, and since then, it was said, nobody had fed the animal. Never before had the natives seen such a fish, and we felt justified in assuming that it belonged to regions which are beyond the reach of fishermen...

4: Krämer--42 (1909) 1937 Woleaians
116, 241 Lamotrek

The cultivation of taro resembles that on Palau. Work in the field is called gelligel. Taro is usually grown in swamps, which are known as buorŭ. The general term for a field is bol, and a single unit is buonnŭ djemalū, whereas a complex is called bonnap. * When the taro is ripe, the following steps are taken: digging up--ŭiŭi (uot), gebuá (bullok), cutting, djarů, of the leaves (=shoot--bagŭ), scraping off the mud from the fruit --uiŭegarre, and washing--djiri. Fertilizing by means of green leaves (as on Palau) is called uállŭ uot, i.e., the leaves are spread out after they have been removed from the plant--go uallŭ--and are gathered in baskets--djuge; the mud (Leberkässchlamm?) is scraped off and this is known as djioie medjaro. Then the young shoots are planted. The best species of taro needs about 6 months; it grows lateral shoots--tŏallag o li uot; burak and fillë need longer; it is said that fillë is good even before the forest blossoming and still shortly after it, or about nine months after it has been planted.

*The following distinctions are also made: a field is composed of a large piece of land which is called djeadjŭval, a small piece of land ádjalo and eabellüngŭpei, and a very small one eagullung.

4: Krämer--46. (1909) 1937 Woleaians
116, 241, 251 Lamotrek

When the breadfruit is ripe, it is picked; the bark is scraped off; it is placed in baskets and soaks for five to six hours in salt water; after that the salt water is left to evaporate. The fruit are put into shallow pits, lined with leaves and are covered with earth. They must stay in the pits for twenty-four hours until the fruit has become very soft. Then the soft mass is thoroughly kneaded together with leaves and packed into deep, lined pits; the holes are covered up with stones and the breadfruit preparation keeps in them for many months and years.

4: Krämer--200 (1909) 1937 Woleaians
241 Woleai

Goru [VMM: a native soldier and supervisor] saw to it that 20,000 new coconut palms were planted after the typhoon. The breadfruit trees did not bear fruit for a long time, and the taro swamps were covered by a salt crust.

4: Krämer--230 (1909) 1937 Woleaians
116, 241, 462 Woleai

The men clear the bush; the clearings are known as táravol. The earth, módjor, is broken up with an oar-like instrument, the digging stick golálivol (Figure 97 [VMM: see source]). The women plant the taro, but occasionally men do the job if they know how to go about it. Leaf fertilizer is called vāl.

14: Born et al--576
116, 241, 262, 731

(1907) 1907

Woleaians
Ifalik

According to my [MR: Fritz's] unfortunately extensive experience of typhoons, only a small number of the palms will recover [MR: following typhoon of March 1907], and will not bear fruit again for two or three years. On high islands (Saipan, Ponape, Jap) the natives are not so exclusively dependent on the coconut palm for food; large stretches are planted with tuberous plants and maize; in protected places breadfruit survives the storm, usually animal nourishment is available (Saipan). But on the low coral islands the life of the inhabitants depends almost entirely on the coconut palm, the breadfruit trees break down in the storm, the taro plants are washed away. For the next few months the fallen ripe and unripe nuts, the marrow of the fallen trees, can be used, but then threatens a state of emergency.

28: Spiro--8 [3] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 241, 262, 271 Ifalik

"All other foods are starch in content--coconuts, taro, breadfruit, and bananas. Mention should be made of sugar cane, papaya, pineapple, and lime, all of which were introduced since contact, but which are so scarce as to be non-existent for all practical purposes.

The coconut tree yields three different kinds of food. The ripe coconut is eaten as is, or is grated and mixed into the various puddings that the women prepare. But the green coconut is much more important than the ripe, for it constitutes almost the entire liquid supply of the island. Coral atolls, obviously, have no natural water supply, and the rain water that is stored in pits or in tin garbage cans is usually unfit to drink, with the result that the green coconut water provides the one substitute for drinking water on the atoll."

28: Spiro--9 (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 241, 251, 262 Ifalik

"The natives distinguish at least three major species of taro, and they are prepared in a number of ways. Taro plants grow the entire year, so that it is an ubiquitous food.

Breadfruit seems to be the favorite starch food, perhaps because it is not as abundant as the others, since it grows only during the prevailing westerlies, but it is absent during the Trade Wind season. It, too, is prepared in a number of ways. Breadfruit is preserved, by salting cooked breadfruit with water, patting it into balls, each wrapped in a separate leaf, and stored in underground pits. It is eaten during the off-season. I could not get myself to eat any because of the---to me--- extremely offensive odor it emits.

Bananas, though abundant, are not a favorite food, and are fed to the hogs and to visiting anthropologists, though the natives do eat them."

28: Spiro--23 (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
841, 241 Ifalik

"He then turned to the women, warning them against working in the taro patches while menstruating. Again we see the same method of dealing with violations of taboos. The taboo of not entering the taro patch, on supernatural punishment of crop extinction, is known to every one. His necessity of mentioning it at the meeting means that Wolptau had become aware of the violation of the taboo, and dealt with it by this general, admonition, rather than by reprimanding the individual culprit or culprits."

28: Spiro--42 [2] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 241, 462 Ifalik

"The Taro is the only plant that needs expensive care-planting, weeding, fertilizing, weeding, and this is the women's responsibility. It is hard, hot, labor, and usually all the women of a household, and sometimes two or three, work together on their own plots of land. As a result of this sexual specialization, the women are the botanical experts. When asked the names of different varieties of taro, Tom admitted his ignorance and referred us to his wife, saying that the women knew the names, but the men were ignorant of them, since horticulture was not their work. Despite the heat, a woman may not drink from a coconut while in the taro patch. Should she violate the taboo, the taro will not grow."

28: Spiro--75 (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians-1-1
116, 788, 241, 342, 396 Ifalik

"It is of note that Malinowski's observation that ritual is used in those areas of life in which the degree of control and predictability is slight, is borne out on Ifaluk. There is no garden ritual of any kind that I could discover. The taro grows regularly, only weeding and transplanting with fertilization being required. There has never been a crop failure, or drowth or any other unforeseen contingency that has effected the supply. Breadfruit and coconuts grow without any tending. Thus in these matters there is no ritual. There are a number of taboos, the violation of which will adversely effect the food supply, but that is a different matter.

But in hazardous undertakings, such as house construction, in which there is the chance of men being crushed to death; or ocean voyages, in which storms may sink the canoe or drive it off its course; or canoe construction, in which a faulty job will endanger lives, ritual is used. Not only are the io-io offered, but there are other rituals performed as well. After the canoe is completed and before it is painted it is sailed inside the lagoon to find out whether and where it may leak or may be faulty otherwise. When it is brought back on land, one of the carpenters sits astride the canoe and recites certain set formulae while waving a coconut branch over it. Unfortunately I did not record the texts but

it asks that the canoe be speedy, that it not drift away when on a journey, and that it not be shattered. (30)"

"30. This ritual is known as the gavaiven. I chanced to see Taroman performing the ritual, and I asked Tom what it was. He became quite sheepish, and said, 'I don't know, another place, another color', which means for reasons, I have never been able to understand, that every society has its own customs, which is a charming way of stating the position of cultural relativism. He proceeded to describe a ship-christening he had witnessed in Manilla, which was, to his way of thinking, the western analogue to the Ifaluk custom."

1: Burrows--28 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 245 Ifalik

"Human life on Ifalik depends on the coconut palm. The story of how much Pacific island peoples rely on this 'most useful of trees' has been told repeatedly. But this atoll culture can not be described without retelling their particular version.

The sandy strip around the lagoon side of the two larger islands, and on both sides of the channel between them, is virtually unbroken coconut grove. Old coconut plantings, more or less gone back to bush, run clear across the northern tip of Falārik, and extend southward beyond the houses on the eastern shore of Falālap. Coconut trees are mixed with the other vegetation everywhere except in the heart of the taro swamp that takes up the center of Falālap. Because of this mixture, no accurate estimate of the percentage of land taken up by coconuts seemed feasible. All that can be said is that the fraction must be large."

1: Burrows--34
116, 554, 245

(1947-48)

Woleaians
Ifalik

"Bright young coconut leaf is often a symbol of success. A fishing party that has had exceptional luck may celebrate, and announce the good news, by putting on ubwūt as the canoe nears home. A man who has won the right to the title of sea-captain (palū) by successfully completing an inter-island voyage, may wear ubwūt ornaments as insignia of his new distinction."

1: Burrows--34
116, 789, 245

(1947-48)

Woleaians
Ifalik

"Finally this young leaf may be an agent of supernatural power. Part of the ritual for a canoe about to set off on a long voyage is to sweep off the hull with ubwūt, wave it over both ends, then fasten pieces of it to the end posts. This is to keep off misfortune. On shore, squares of mat about 18 inches across are plaited of it, taken to the house of the great gods to be blessed or endowed with power, then hung on branches all about the shore. They are supposed to keep evil sea-spirits from landing."

1: Burrows--34 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 322, 245 Ifalik

"The stout midribs of coconut leaves are laid crosswise in the path of a canoe being hauled to or from the canoe-house. As this green midrib does not burn readily, it also makes a good rack for smoking fish. Its perfectly straight grain adapts it to still other uses. A strip of it makes a flexible ruler, for measuring and drawing lines on the curved surface of a canoe hull during its construction. Smaller strips peeled off the surface make thongs for tying thatch to a roof. A strip thin as a thread, formed into a loop and held between a woman's fingers, is used to split pandanus leaf into strips of even width to make a mat or fine basket."

1: Burrows--34 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 245, 322 Ifalik

"Coconut wood varies in quality from a hard, dense layer on the outside of the trunk to a comparatively pithy center. The wood rots rather quickly when exposed to moisture. For this reason none of it is used in canoes, and coconut trunks are not set in the ground as posts for houses except when nothing better is available. They are then put over a fire and scorched to harden them, but even so are said to last only a year or two.

Under a roof and clear of the ground, coconut wood escapes this disadvantage. It is in general use for the beams that form the superstructure of a house. Where thin, elastic strips are needed, the hard outer layer makes excellent material. So coconut is considered the best of wood for thatch rafters. The same qualities make it the only wood used for fish spears (kowai). On Ifalik these are not light lances but heavy pikes 15 to 20 feet long. They have simple points without barbs. They are used mainly in a bonito drive when the school of fish is not considered large enough to drive ashore."

1: Burrows--34 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 372, 245 Ifalik

"Dry brown leaf makes kindling and fuel--for Ifalik, though well wooded, has such a small area that firewood is scarce. A bonfire of dry coconut leaf will illuminate a night gathering. Bundles of it make torches used in several kinds of night fishing."

1: Burrows--34 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 524, 245 Ifalik

"Children use coconut leaflet midrib for some of their toys. A big bread-fruit leaf, stiffened here and there by weaving strips of leaflet midrib in and out, along and across, makes a perfectly good kite. Other toys are made in the same way. Tiny coconuts, the size of a small child's fist, are fitted with a strip of leaflet midrib for a stem, and spun as tops."

1: Burrows--34 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 227, 245 Ifalik

"The slender leaflet midribs (logto) some 1/8 inch in diameter, where the midrib of the whole leaf is several inches--are useful where lightness and flexibility are necessary. On a frame of stiffer withes, lengths of leaflet midrib are lashed criss-cross to make a fish trap (ul pam) of the smaller size. These are set on the bottom in shallow water, weighted down with sand and baited with crushed crabs, to catch small fish."

1: Burrows--34 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 412, 245 Ifalik

"Tied around a wooden handle, strips of leaflet midrib become broomstraws."

1: Burrows--35
116, 245, 415

(1947-48)

Woleaians
Ifalik

"Still other parts of the coconut tree are useful. The clothlike fabric (ʻulu or ʻulʻulu) that grows about the base of the leaves makes a strainer for toddy or medicine. Mothers make water-droppers of it for their babies. Folding a piece into the shape of a funnel, they put some fragrant herb into it, then dip it in water, hold it over the baby's mouth, and let the water drop in. Some of the herbs used for this purpose are listed on p. 43 (this ms.).

A dry fruit stalk makes a crude broom, when one of the better brooms of leaflet midrib tied to a handle is not available. Dry flower spathes, while less used for torches than in some Pacific islands, occasionally serve for fire-brands or kindling."

1: Burrows--35 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 245, 105 Ifalik

"We have seen that the coconut is meat and drink to the people of Ifalik; supplies most of the material for their houses; provides the cordage used to hold all composite wooden articles together; makes baskets, mats, fuel, and has a multitude of other uses, even acting as a symbol and agent of supernatural power. The list above does not pretend to be complete. Whether human life could be sustained on such an atoll without this plant is open to question. If it could, it would have to be a radically different life from that which the people lead there now."

1: Burrows--35 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 262, 245 Ifalik

"Breadfruit is the principal starchy food, when it is bearing. Its wood is also the most in demand for timber. In season, breadfruit makes up more of the bulk of the diet than anything else. Its main season is the rag, the time of prevailing westerly winds, approximately June to November. The crop reaches it height about July, then dwindles until by November there is very little. A second but smaller crop comes in the trade-wind season. During our stay, breadfruit seemed to be coming in again in January. Mai vae made up most or all of it. We were told that it would have come earlier but for two near-hurricanes, one in November and the other late in December, that destroyed much of the young fruit."

1: Burrows--36 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 381, 245 Ifalik

"Breadfruit sap makes a gum (bwIIIs) used to glue the joints between canoe planks. This is collected by slashing the bark of the tree in several places and, after gum has gathered on the wound, scraping it off with a knife. The day after collecting, it is washed in salt water and bits of bark and other foreign matter taken out. Then it is soaked in fresh water for several days and kept in a bottle.

Breadfruit gum is also the source of the soot used in tattooing. It is burned, and the soot collected on a smooth surface held over the fire. The surface used in recent times has been that of 'Yap bottles', --huge glass carboys from Japan. The soot is scraped off the glass on a breadfruit leaf, then put into a coconut half-shell and mixed with a little water until ready for use. (As tattooing was no longer practised on Ifalik at the time of our stay, this is a past rather than present use of breadfruit, --yet so recent that the process was fresh in memory, at least among the older people.)"

1: Burrows--36 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 322, 396, 245 Ifalik

"The yellow wood of the breadfruit is light, soft, and easily worked, yet does not split easily and is said to be very durable. It constitutes the underbody of nearly all canoe hulls (I saw one small underbody of the tougher ragues (Calophyllum inophyllum), a favorite in high islands.) Breadfruit wood is also used for all canoe planks and outrigger floats. Only smaller parts subject to special strain, like end posts, outrigger booms, and the sticks and braces of the outrigger attachments, are made of harder and heavier wood."

7: Senfft--194
116, 245

(No date) 1904

Woleaians
Ifalik

A few of the palm trees had been attacked by coconut scales, and I ordered that the fronds of those trees be cut down and burned. There is a large number of rats on the island, which do considerable damage to the palms.

,8: Senfft--283
116, 245, 273

(1905) 1906

Woleaians
Lamotrek

Here [MR: Lamotrek] again I had occasion to observe that previously given orders for the protection of the palm trees and the prohibition of consumption of sour toddy had in several instances gone unheeded; it is indeed a sad fact that as far as drinking is concerned the white dealer serves as a very poor model to the natives. A walk through the island revealed the occurrence of cochineal insects on four palm trees; the trees were cleaned and in future the chief will be responsible for the burning of the leaves attacked by the insects.

9: Senfft--13
116, 245, 433

(1903) 1904

Woleaians
Lamotrek

The yearly production [MR: of copra] including that of Flato and Satuval amounts to approximately 45 tons. In spite of the assertion of the merchant, who is stationed with the firm of D. D. O'Keefe, that the scale insect disease does not exist on Lamutrik, I noticed a few young palm trees bearing the sign of this sickness. Another enemy of the palm tree are the numerous rats which eat the nuts from the trees. The leaves of the pandanus which have sharp thorns and wind around the palm trees serve as protection. Among the banana trees a disease could also be noticed that probably has its origin in a colorless worm of 1.5 to 2 cm. in length and which is to be found in the roots and the top of the tree. I, therefore, ordered one of my best policemen to take immediate measures for the protection of the plants.

9: Senfft--14 (1903) 1904 Woleaians
116, 245, 262 Woleai

The cultivation is the same as on Lamutrik, partly more abundant, but here, too, yams and bamboo are lacking. Fowl, pigs and fish are numerous. The islands are planted to the highest density with coconut palms in luscious green. I noticed the disease caused by the presence of the scale insect on only two young palm trees each on the islands of Mariom and Taganlap, but here, too, the greatest damage to the palm trees was wrought by rats.

12: Lutke--137-138 (1828) 1835 Woleaians
116, 245 Woleai

It seemed to us that coconuts are not as abundant here as on Lougounor and yet the wood is [138] bordered with coconut trees.

22: German Government--185
116, 245, 731

(1909-10) 1911

Woleaians
Woleai

Repeated trips of the district official and the Imperial Government physician. . . to the Central Carolines and the southern islands were undertaken to investigate the present condition of those atolls and their inhabitants after the typhoons of 1905 and 1907. It was ascertained that all islands had recovered almost completely. The coconut palms bore abundant fruit; on Oleai 20,000 new trees had been planted under the direction of a minor police officer. Only the breadfruit trees do not yet bear fruit again, and the washed-out and salt-soaked taro fields on the islands that had been hit by the tidal wave do not yield any crops.

41: Bates & Abbott N-5 (1953) 1958
OR21 Woleai OR21
Ifaluk

are "natural" and to what extent man-made, because they have been subject to careful cultivation for many generations. The care of the gardens is exclusively women's work and they become expert gardeners. The plants are set in neat rows in rectangular patches, each patch belonging to a particular household so that each household on the atoll has its share of the large Falalap gardens. Weeds grow luxuriously in the rich, mucky soil, and weeding is the main gardening chore. The weeds, I was interested to see, are always buried in the muck, so the practice of "green manuring" is an ancient one here. With young plants, coconut leaves were sometimes used as mulch, to cut down the growth of weeds.

I was greatly impressed, watching these women go about their work, at how little a Westerner would be able to tell them about gardening practices, at how well their methods were adapted to the plants and environment of their atoll. Perhaps one could put this another way, and wonder at how little modern "civilized" man with all his science has been able to improve on, or change, the gardening practices developed by peasant cultures through generations living close to the earth. We have made drastic changes in large-scale agriculture, but the gardener, throughout the world, shares a curiously large fund of common lore.

But I had intended to write here about food, not about agricultural methods. Wot and pulach were eaten to some extent, even during the breadfruit season, just as the preserved breadfruit (mar) was eaten to some extent at other times of the year, making some variation in the daily monotony of starch. There were many slightly different ways of cooking these tubers. We liked best a way of preparing wot (*Colocasia*) whereby it was mashed, cooked with coconut cream, moulded into little balls in a pot, and the whole covered with a thick paste of coconut meat. The effect was a little like that of mashed sweet potatoes served with heavy whipped cream.

Coconut, of course, permeated every aspect of Ifalukian cooking—the milk from green nuts and ripe nuts, the flesh from green nuts and ripe nuts, the sap from the cut flower stalks (here called hachi, perhaps best called "toddy" in English). The coconut was more often used as a supplement in cooking breadfruit or taro, as a seasoning, or the